



PREVENTION TALK

INTERNET SAFETY

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In recent years, electronic games, home computers, and the Internet have assumed an important place in the lives of young people. "The Annenberg public policy center reported that among the U.S. households with children 8 to 17, 60% had home computers, and of those children, 61% of them had computers with Internet services."¹ When a national sample of children and teenagers was asked to choose which medium to bring with them to a desert island, more children 8 to 18 chose a computer with Internet access than any other medium.²

Teens use the Internet for schoolwork, for communication with local and distant friends, and to have fun, especially by finding information related to their interests and hobbies. The Internet is one way teens use the computer in the timeless quest to establish their identity.

REMEMBER:

It is your job as a parent to find the right balance between Internet safety and freedom for your teen(s).

One new trend in the Internet world is called "Blogs," or self-published Web pages. According to survey data from Peresius Company, a maker of Web-survey software, 52.8% of Blogs belong to those 19 and younger. Personal Web pages for teens have become as common as diaries and locker decorations once were. Blogs often contain personal photographs and details about the person that make them unique. Friends surf by and leave fun messages. Many teens are not aware how easily something dangerous can happen over the Internet,³ such as predators soliciting a teen's interest through sex or illicit drug offers.

For more information call:

THINK ABOUT:

- The adolescent brain is being reconstructed, which impairs judgment and can put youth at risk while operating the heavy machinery of the Internet.
- The Internet has become an important part of our lives, which can leave young people open to Internet crime.
- Place your home computer in a public place that is easier to monitor.

ACTION STEPS:

Share with your teen(s) the following Internet safety tips:

- Don't give out your private information (your full name, address or school name) or your Internet password to anyone.
- Remember that people online aren't always who they say they are.⁴
- Don't accept emails, files, or links from people you don't know.
- Block a person if they are bothering you in Instant Messaging. Go to My Internet Service; click on Preferences, and then on Privacy.

Visit this site with your teen: www.ftc.gov/bcp/conlineedcams/kidzprivacy/index.html. In an effort to put parents in the driver's seat, the Federal Trade Commission has established new rules for website operators to make sure that kids' privacy is protected while they're online.

SOURCES:

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- ² Roberts, D.F., Rideout, V.J., Foehr, U.G. & Brodie, M. (1999). Kids and media at the new millennium: A comprehensive national analysis of children's media use. A Kaiser Family Foundation Report, Menlo Park, CA: Author.
- ³ Teens: It's a diary. Adults: It's unsafe. (2005, May 25). Retrieved August 4, 2005, from www.csmonitor.com
- ⁴ Subrahmanyam, K., Greenfield, P., Kraut, R., & Gross, E. (2001). The impact of computer use on children's and adolescents' development. *Applied Psychology*, 22, 7-30.